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MEMORANDUM FOR: Colonel Dubois.

Subject: Information Concerning USBGN.

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This information has been secured from several sources within the Office, Chief of Engineers and is reported in order of the verbal questions given to me yesterday.

1. Q. When was USBGN established?

A. a. Executive Order No. 27-A, dated 4 September 1890. After existence of nearly 44 years as an independent agency USBGN was abolished on April 17, 1934 by Executive Order No. 6680, and its functions, personnel records, equipment, etc. were transferred to the Department of The Interior. Two units were created (recorded in Department Order No. 1010, December 10, 1935):

1. A Division of Geographical Names with paid executive secretary who prepared the geographical name cases, and

2. Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from federal agencies concerned with production of maps and charts; representatives from several Geographical Societies, and 3 members of the Advisory Committee, constituted the Executive Committee which rendered the names decisions for the approval of the Secretary of The Interior.

b. First meeting of the Advisory Committee held October 17, 1934. ~~There is to be an order~~ No representative of the War Department has been a member of the Executive Committee since 1937.

2. Q. By what authority did the USBGN operate?

A. a. The following is an excerpt from Order No. 1944 signed by Abe Fortas, Acting Secretary of The Interior, April 17, 1944: "Authority: In Pursuant to provisions, Section 161, Revised Statutes (5 USC, Section 22) Executive Orders No. 27-A dated September 4, 1890; No. 399, dated January 23, 1906; No. 493, dated Aug. 10, 1906; No. 3206, dated December 30, 1919; and No. 6680, dated April 17, 1934; and Department Order No. 1010, dated December 10, 1935, it is hereby ordered as follows:

JCS review completed

"I. The Director of the United States Board on Geographical Names may hereafter act in relation to the following classes of matters without obtaining Secretarial approval, unless the Secretary in any particular matter determines otherwise, and subject in any event to an appeal to the Secretary in appropriate cases:

(a) Approve and promulgate geographical names which conform to principles and policies approved by the Secretary, in the United States, its territories and possessions, international waters, and in lands or waters to which the United States has not formally recognized the sovereignty of a foreign nation.

(b) Request advice and recommendations from the Advisory Committee or its members.

(c) Appoint special committees to consider questions affecting large numbers of names in a single country, language, or other category.

(d) Approve and promulgate foreign geographical names derived by approved rules for treatment.

(e) Approve and promulgate foreign geographical names to which rules for treatment do not apply.

II. All general rules, regulations and instructions must be approved by the Secretary, (except directions to Government agencies for the treatment of geographical names in foreign regions or countries.) This order does not affect the responsibility of the Solicitor for the review of legal questions.

III. This order is effective immediately."

3. Q. When was USBGN enlarged?

A. a. March 1943.

4. Q. Who supplied the operating funds?

A. a. Virtually the entire appropriation was supplied by Office, Chief of Engineers, Project 440, Engineers Service, Army.

5. Q. Who established the Table of Organization for the USBGN?

A. a. The writer has been unable to find functional charts, duty statements or job justifications. Therefore, it is assumed that the sole responsibility for the T/O remained with the Department of The Interior.

6. Q. Did the OCE exert any supervisory control over the USBGN?

A. a. No. The OCE realized the need for a central adjudicating agency and elected to transfer funds from the OCE to permit enlargement of the USBGN. The reasons for selecting this organization were based on the belief that the USBGN had accumulated a set of precedents and a background of scholarship which OCE intended to exploit rather than duplicate.

7. Q. What were the principal objections to the performances of USBGN?

A. a. The following are excerpts from Col. Loper's letter to Chairman, Topographical Subcommittee, JIC, 15 May 1944:

"Many decisions of USBGN have appeared long after maps, charts, and intelligence productions have been published.

"In rendering decisions the Board has attempted, by direct correspondence from Secretary of The Interior to the Chief of the Producing Agencies, to revise its policy by demanding revisions and re-issue of offending publications.

"Furthermore, the Board has reversed itself in some cases, nullifying decisions made many years ago and considered as firm by maps and charts producers.

"Although, extremely helpful the Board has become arbitrary and its operations may prove embarrassing to the War and Navy Departments.

8. Q. What is position of AMS in future picture?

A. a. The AMS has written to the Chief of Engineers announcing a plan whereby they intend to perform during fiscal year 1945, the following:

1. Continue production of place-name manuals.
2. Continue transcriptions of non-Roman and non-alphabet languages.
3. Checking of place names on map compilation.

4. Production of approximately 20 gazetteers.

b. You are aware of the program suggested by Major Spillers to the Topographical Subcommittee which outlines certain requests to be made of the JIC. The AMS are awaiting action by OCE before proceeding to obtain additional personnel to assume the tasks formerly performed by the USBGN insofar as they affected project work listed above. No action has been taken by OCE pursuant to the submission of its program by Major Spillers.

9. It is my understanding that USBGN was discussed during a session of the subcommittee on War Department appropriations 18 May 1944. In this meeting several references were made to an article which appeared recently in a nationally distributed magazine. Further, it is understood that recently OCE replied to questions of the members of the House Subcommittee and explained relationship of the work performed by the USBGN to the production of map and chart agencies engaged in the war effort.

10. Attached are excerpts from a report entitled "Study of Position of U. S. Board on Geographical Names," W. L. G. Joerg, Chairman, 22 May 1944.